



African-American Literature & Classics Writers

*This list includes only a few of many African-American writers. Check the San Leandro Public Library's online catalog or ask a librarian for further information on the subject. To discover more about African American writers, please visit "African-American Writers: a Celebration" at www.mtsu.edu/~vvesper/afam.htm.
** Please note: some of these authors write about African American characters but are not African American.*

Angelou, Maya. And Still I Rise. 811.54 ANGELOU.

Maya Angelou's third poetry collection, a unique celebration of life, consists of rhythms of strength, love, and remembrance, songs of the street, and lyrics of the heart.

Baldwin, James. Going to Meet the Man. CLASSIC BALDWIN.

A collection of eight short stories that explore with devastating frankness the roots of love, hate, and racial conflict. By turns haunting, heartbreaking, and horrifying, this is a major work by one of America's quintessential writers.

Campbell, Bebe Moore. Brothers and Sisters. FIC CAMPBELL.

Against a backdrop of post-riots Los Angeles, bank manager Esther Jackson, her coworker Mallory Post, and Humphrey Boone – the man who comes between them – must individually confront their fears and dreams.

Chase-Riboud, Barbara. Echo of Lions. FIC CHASE-RIBOUD.

A historical-fiction account relates the story of one group of individuals who beat incredible odds and changed the course of American history through the celebrated antebellum *Amistad* affair when African slaves rebelled and seized the slave ship.

Dove, Rita. Selected Poems. 811.54 DOVE.

The astonishing poems of the nation's 1993 to 1995 Poet Laureate -- the youngest poet so named, as well as the first African-American chosen for the position. Includes poetry devoted to the themes of slavery and freedom, as well as home and the world.

Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man. FIC ELLISON.

A classic from the moment it first appeared in 1952, chronicling the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless black man, as he moves through the hellish levels of American intolerance and cultural blindness. Winner of the National Book Award for Fiction.

Haley, Alex. Roots. 929.209 HALEY.

The saga of an American family that starts with eighteenth-century Gambia slave Kunta Kinte and ends with the author himself.

Hansberry, Lorraine. A Raisin in the Sun. CLASSIC HANSBERRY.

An African-American family is united in love and pride as they struggle to overcome poverty and harsh living conditions, in the award-winning 1959 play about an embattled Chicago family. Awarded the New York Drama Critics Circle Award.

Hughes, Langston. The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes. 811.52 HUGHES.

The first comprehensive collection of the verse of a writer who has been called both the poet laureate of African America and our greatest popular poet since Walt Whitman.

Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes were Watching God. CLASSIC HURSTON.

Capturing both the ongoing "war of the sexes," as well as the tender moments of male-female relations, the author also focuses on Janie's relationships with other African American women, adding powerful themes of female bonding, identity, and empowerment.

Kincaid, Jamaica. Mr. Potter. FIC KINCAID.

A seemingly conventional narrative about a man's coming to consciousness becomes something quite different as the narrator, one of Mr. Potter's many illegitimate daughters, slowly reveals her relationship to her father and her voice comes to dominate the story.

Lorde, Audre. The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde. 811.54 LORDE.

Over 300 poems -- from one of this country's most influential poets noted for the passion and vision of her poems about being African American, a lesbian, a mother, and a daughter.

Major, Clarence. Dirty Bird Blues. FIC MAJOR.

Manfred Banks, a Chicago blues musician and blue-collar worker, drifts from Chicago to Omaha in the 1950s, struggling with domestic responsibilities and a racist America that assaults him at every turn.





Morrison, Toni. Beloved. FIC MORRISON.

This haunting chronicle of slavery and its aftermath traces the life of a young woman, Sethe, who has kept a terrible memory at bay only by shutting down part of her mind. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

Mowry, Jess. Way Past Cool. FIC MOWRY.

Living by a strict code of honor, two rival gangs of boys on Oakland's tough streets find a common enemy in Deek, the sixteen-year-old drug dealer who controls the neighborhood through intimidation.

Walker, Alice. The Color Purple. CLASSIC WALKER.

Winner of the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, this unforgettable portrait of an abused and uneducated African American woman's struggle for empowerment is rich with passion, pain, inspiration, and an indomitable love of life.

West, Dorothy. The Wedding. FIC WEST.

An elite African American community in 1950s Martha's Vineyard prepares for the impending nuptials of Shelby Coles, daughter of the neighborhood's leading family, and her intended groom Meade Tyler, a white jazz musician.

Wright, Richard. Black Boy (American hunger): a record of childhood and youth. CLASSIC WRIGHT.

Sometimes considered a fictionalized autobiography or an autobiographical novel because of its use of novelistic techniques, *Black Boy* is an enduring story of one young man's coming of age during a particular time and place in the Jim Crow south.

Yerby, Frank. Dahomean: a historical novel. FIC YERBY.

African aristocrat Hwesu is sold into slavery and must learn to interact in his new world. *Dahomean* is also the tale of a great people, a great culture vanquished by greed, the slave trade, and the encroachments of destructive colonialism.

... African American Book of Values: classic moral stories. 808.803 AFRICAN.

A treasure trove of folk stories, true tales, and other pearls of wisdom featuring a host of historical figures that provides inspiration for readers of all ages and creates a new recipe for a life full of insight and personal power.

... Calling the Wind: twentieth century African American short stories. FIC CALLING.

Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, Charles Wright, and more than fifty other important African-American authors record pivotal stories from post-slavery days through the Harlem Renaissance and into the nineties.

... Every Shut Eye Ain't Asleep: an anthology of poetry by African Americans since 1945. 811.54 EVERY.

A rich collection of the work of post-World War II African-American poets, bringing together the voices of the most important African-American poets of our time.

... Three Classic African American Novels. FIC THREE.

Three pioneering novels of African-American literature: *The Heroic Slave* by Frederick Douglass; *Clotel*, or, *The President's Daughter*, by William Wells Brown; and *Our Nig*, or, *Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* by Harriet E. Wilson.



Harlem Renaissance Literature, Plays, & Poetry:

The Harlem Renaissance was a time of great African-American artistic and educational development. Immediately following World War I, African-Americans newly transplanted from the segregationist South sank their roots into the industrial North with hopes for a new future. Harlem became the greatest black city in the world. This city gave birth to famous black artists such as Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks.

Cullen, Countee and Gerald Lyn Early. My Soul's High Song: the collected writings of Countee Cullen, voice of the Harlem Renaissance. 811.52 CULLEN. The very best of Countee Cullen's poetry and prose available in one collection.

Hatch, James Vernon and Leo Hamalian. Lost Plays of the Harlem Renaissance, 1920-1940. 812.008 LOST.

A compilation of sixteen plays written by Harlem residents over a twenty year period that cover the realm of human experience in styles as wide-ranging as poetry, farce, comedy, tragedy, social realism, and romance.



Lewis, David L. The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader. 810.808 PORTABLE.

The best of Harlem Renaissance literature, or at least the most exemplary, is sampled here, with works being presented either in total or in telling excerpt. General categories include essay, memoir, fiction, poetry, and drama.

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